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SUBJECT: Presidential Envoy Gordon Mansfield's Meeting with FM Nguyen Dzy Nien on the 10th Anniversary of Normalization

1. (SBU) Summary: Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Dzy Nien and Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon Mansfield met in Hanoi July 12 to exchange high level greetings and congratulations on the tenth anniversary of bilateral relations. They reaffirmed the importance of building mutual understanding and continuing the positive momentum generated by Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai's recent visit to Washington and highlighted several areas of especially beneficial cooperation, including POW/MIA accounting, commercial ties, humanitarian assistance and student exchange. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Presidential Envoy to Vietnam for the Celebration of the 10th Anniversary of Normalization Gordon Mansfield met with Foreign Minister Nguyen Dzy Nien July 12. The Ambassador, PAO and Poloff accompanied. Deputy Secretary Mansfield told FM Nien he was pleased to be in Vietnam as President Bush's representative and happy to be able to heighten relations and bring "a message of cooperation and friendship from the American people to the Vietnamese people." Nien said the anniversary is a great occasion and well-timed, coming immediately following the historic visit of Vietnam's Prime Minister to the United States. He passed on a message from the Prime Minister to the President that the PM "highly appreciates the friendly development of the relationship for mutual benefit and cooperation, and expects it will reach new heights on the principle of peace, stability and development in the world." Deputy Secretary Mansfield promised to convey that message to the President, and noted that the President and the Vietnamese PM clearly had a substantive and important meeting during the PM's visit to Washington June 21.

3. (U) Deputy Secretary Mansfield said it is important to recognize that in the past 10 years the United States and Vietnam have taken steps to address issues of mutual concern, such as human rights and religious freedom. Nien replied that Vietnam sees great progress in all fields, especially trade and economic ties. The United States is Vietnam's top trade partner, he observed, and investment is growing with the boost from the PM's visit. Tourism from the United States is another booming area, Nien said. Areas of disagreement exist, he acknowledged, but he is convinced that through discussion it will be possible for both sides to come to agreement.

4. (U) Nien said that as a senior official in the Veterans Affairs Department, Deputy Secretary Mansfield must understand the need for humanitarian assistance. The assistance the United States already supplies to Vietnam is highly appreciated, Nien said, noting especially the President's decision to help Vietnam with HIV/AIDS relief. As a veteran, Mansfield must understand the consequences of war, Nien continued. Nien said he hopes Mansfield will continue to examine and address the issue of helping Vietnamese veterans suffering from the consequences of war. (Note: "consequences of war" is the Vietnamese euphemism for a basket of outstanding requests for assistance with the cleanup of sites contaminated with unexploded ordnance and landmines, and for individuals whose disabilities the GVN believes are caused by Agent Orange. End Note.) Vietnam is also committed to humanitarian action, Nien said, noting that on the issue of fullest possible accounting for U.S. personnel missing in action Vietnam is providing the "fullest help." Now that field activities have expanded to the Central Highlands, the two sides will see "successful operations in coming months," Nien said. Deputy Secretary Mansfield thanked Nien for the cooperative efforts of the people and the Government of Vietnam in accounting for U.S. servicemen missing in action. The bilateral effort predates normalization, Mansfield noted, and demonstrates the dedication of the Vietnamese and American peoples to working together. The USG hopes to expand accounting efforts, as well as access to documents and information, he continued.

5. (U) Commercial ties are also a strong component of the U.S.-Vietnam bilateral relationship, Mansfield said. As President Bush told the Prime Minister, the United States is committed to working with Vietnam to facilitate Vietnam's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO). Mansfield added that he had seen news articles earlier in the morning reporting a series of commercial and economic laws that passed in the National Assembly, which demonstrated that Vietnam is moving forward with its legislative framework for

WTO entry.

16. (U) U.S. Veterans are important advocates of the development of the bilateral relationship, Mansfield said, noting that Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and John McCain (R-AZ) had both stood with President Clinton when he announced the normalization of relations in 1995. Nien said that Vietnam's people are "optimistic for the future of relations with the United States." The younger generation is much more open and understanding of all outsiders, but especially Americans, he said. Student exchanges enhance this positive development, and Vietnam wants to send even more Vietnamese students to the United States. Vietnamese students coming to the United States, and Americans, especially veterans, visiting Vietnam, will increase understanding, Deputy Secretary Mansfield replied.

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17. (U) Nien added that Vietnam is happy that relations have expanded to cover security and military cooperation, and that Vietnam looks forward to participating in International Military Exchange and Training (IMET) activities and is already engaged in counterterrorism cooperation with the United States. Deputy Secretary Mansfield expressed the USG's appreciation for that, saying "terrorists threaten all civilized countries." Security cooperation, and cooperation in all areas at all levels, will cement the partnership. "When we have mutual understanding," he concluded, "we will find mutual paths for moving forward."

18. (U) Later that same evening, Nien was the main GVN representative at the large Embassy representational event formally commemorating the 10th anniversary of the normalization of relations. He repeated publicly many of his private comments, saying in his speech that "the visit has brought the two countries' ties to a new level through the development of a constructive partnership, friendship and multifaceted cooperation on the principle of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit." The event, and Nien's comments, received wide press attention. GVN representation at the event was above average, with several guests at the vice-minister level or higher.

19. (U) Deputy Secretary Mansfield cleared this message.

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